

“Oakwoods Cemetery, Chicago” (Illinois)

In *The Monumental News*, Vol. 6, No. 8
August 1894, pp. 383-385

According to this article (on pp. 393):

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This article, which begins on the next page,
is presented on the Stone Quarries and Beyond web site.

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December 2013



ENTRANCE TO OAKWOODS CEMETERY, CHICAGO.

Oakwoods Cemetery, Chicago.

In appearance Oakwoods is materially improved by the new steel picket fence, six feet high, that now encloses it; and the entrance has gained dignity and impressiveness by the new fence being set out to the north line of the cemetery property, taking in the strip of land left vacant by the recent removal of the Illinois Central R. R.'s. branch track that formerly ran across the entire north front of the grounds.

The curved part of the fence on either side of the entrance, and the gates, are of handsomely hammered iron; and the pointed columns that support this part of the unusually elaborate and expensive boundary, are of polished Wisconsin granite, the lower ones being eight feet and the three taller ones, at the gates, twenty feet in height.

The effect of the light tracery of iron and steel, and of the brilliantly polished, richly colored columns seen against the light gray St. Lawrence marble of the office, and against the background of foliage is extremely good. The unfortunately placed pole of the electric railway that detracts from the appearance of the accompanying illustration is less noticeable in the real scene, and the entrance is now of a character calculated to create that first good impression that is credited with being a potent factor in later opinions.

But there are important improvements going forward in the interior of the Cemetery that, while more subtle and less likely to catch the eye of the ordinary observer, (at least in detail), are quite as satisfactory, and even more necessary than the new fence.

Oakwoods has always been pretty in spots, but only of late has one noted evidences of a coherent plan to make of the grounds a harmonious whole—a complete picture. The superintendent, (whom

we take for granted deserves the credit of trying to bring about this happy condition), should have less difficulty in accomplishing so desirable an end there than in any cemetery of the same size and age with which we are acquainted. If he has the backing of the Association and the intelligent co-operation of the many enlightened lot owners, he will doubtless make Oakwoods lovely. And in these days when the best cemeteries are good examples of landscape art, and many of the cemetery superintendents are artists, it is likely that he will have the requisite co-operation and backing—especially as this is progressive Chicago where the legitimate ambition to set a good example is rife.

It should be easy because there is less bad work to be undone, as well as because much very good work stands as a foundation to which still better can be added.

For instance, some excellent planting is already well established; and the place is free from examples of objectionable old customs that have crept into newer cemeteries. Here there are no fences around lots—as though they were likely to run away; no cumbersome copings to help cut up the simple expanse, and, barring the misguided efforts at decoration seen in some unsightly borders of summer bedding plants, there are no symptoms of an intention to turn the grounds into a checker board.

It should be an expanse of closely cut, well watered sward—a great sweep of lawn where flickering leaf shadows weave delicate tracery, or long fingers of light and shade lie like a benediction.

It is a pity that in our day when Art has come to be more than a name, that bad taste in planting should be tolerated for any reason; it is doubly a pity that it should be publicly encouraged in high places by the ones to whom so many look for guidance. If *all* lot owners would but expend a fair



"A WELL SET GEM," OAKWOODS CEMETERY.

sum annually for the care of the grass, and of such hardy shrubs and perennials as would really enhance the beauty of Oakwoods as a sylvan picture—what a delightful picture it could be made.

Since spring, Mr. Lawson has accomplished some good and much needed work in thinning out the trees that have for years been crowding each other to the point of suffocation. Few shrubs find room for proper development when set at a distance of only five feet apart, and to set trees so close is simply to grow lumber—not pleasing plantations, and still less characteristic specimens.

The acre owned by the U. S. Government and used as burial ground for Confederate soldiers has alone furnished six hundred trunks to the axe. Heretofore this space was nothing but a solid and clumsy block of foliage—merely a wall of leaves. It now looks vastly better, the grass is already improved by the admission of air and sunlight, and with the contemplative figure on the monument that now marks the spot, the south end of the grounds is made far more interesting and attractive. But the weeding out of superfluous and inferior trees is being carried through the enclosure, and while in many instances it plainly should have been done long ago, their removal will still be of marked benefit to individual trees, and to the general effect.

Many of those taken out are soft maples, of which there was a superabundance; Box Elders, too, are also being taken up in numbers, (in every case where there is a better tree in close proximity), because they are shabby trees of shabby habits. They lose so many leaves during summer that their neighborhood is kept constantly untidy, and the grass sometimes permanently injured, all of which is a fruitful source of that *bete noir* of cemetery superintendents—unnecessary work.

The deciduous trees grown at Oakwoods that do especially well are the English and German Linden, their American relative the Basswood, Elm (American) White Ash which is extra good, and above all, the hard or sugar Maple, which seems to be about everything a tree should be for cemetery purposes in this latitude.

The lakes in the older parts of the grounds, with their surroundings, are the present beauty spots of the grounds. The illustrations give glimpses of water views that are charming as a whole and that also show several good points in detail.

Like all cemeteries Oakwoods contains a mixed showing of stone work, good, bad and indifferent—principally indifferent. Nevertheless it has some very expensive and elaborate monuments, as well as some that have decided artistic merit. But in all



LAKE SHORE PLANTING, OAKWOODS CEMETERY.

Art in Monumental Work.

Paper read by O. A. Coltman of Cleveland, O., at the Midsummer meeting of the Ohio Marble and Granite Dealers' Association.

In discussing monumental art there is a tendency to begin by grumbling so much does the product of our monument makers differ from the ideals of the draftsman. Personally, I feel that we are missing a great opportunity in not turning into better shapes the vast sums which are expended in these attempts to satisfy an artistic want. For what form of artistic effort is there so much money paid out each year as for sepulchral monuments, and from what comes this patronage except from a popular desire to realize an ideal.

Painting and sculpture are exotics in this country as yet. An art which is patronized exclusively by connoisseurs, and has to be supported by money donated by those wishing to pose as patrons of intellect will never represent the artistic feeling of a community. Those who have studied art in former ages know that the great epochs, which divide art history into its productive periods, were the outgrowth of a popular sentiment which can in some degree be likened to the enthusiasm which has stimulated the people of to-day to buy memorials. There has always been something stronger in the minds of the people of these times than a mere desire for the beautiful, and there is no difficulty in determining that it is the religious element which has always been the mainspring of artistic activity. And thus while the art of the monument maker may be thought unworthy of attention, there is a question whether it will not be the only art by which the intelligence of the times is to be judged by future ages. But the future is not worrying the makers of monuments to any great extent, and you couldn't expect it to; they are selling monuments as they might any other article of merchandise, and supplying the wants of their customers. These customers, by adding a refined taste to their enthusiasm, will change the forms and make them better, for if there is any high standard reached it must be demanded by the good taste of the man who pays the bill.

In this way, leaving the conventional low relief of the weeping willow on a sandstone slab, up through the confectioner's devices in white marble, we are now assisting the people to select work which is a constant improvement on what has gone before. But the millenium will only come when the customer knows unerringly a good thing when he sees it. Under present conditions it is an exceedingly difficult matter to design a good monument. It has always been an astonishing thing to me to find out how much the prospective purchaser of a monument knows about the finer details of architecture,



CONFEDERATE SOLDIERS' MONUMENT, OAKWOODS CEMETERY.

fine cemeteries the style of the memorial stones of all sizes should be required to meet an established artistic standard. The number of conspicuous ones would then be few, while every one, (whether costing much or little,) would be in good taste. Each lot could then be considered in relation to those around it, and the grounds would be beautiful and symmetrical as a whole instead of being spotted, (as is too often the case,) with all sorts of incongruous, inharmonious, meaningless and even grotesque designs and objects.

Every cemetery should be a park; a quiet, peaceful landscape; a place of velvet sward, clear waters, beautiful foliage and singing birds. Markers for recording names and dates should be so low and inconspicuous as not to count at all in the general view; and all monuments should be subordinated to the large general effect—each being designed especially to suit the location where it is to stand, thus gaining the proper setting and at the same time adding a harmonious feature to the picture.

FANNY COPLEY SEAVEY.

[Several types of monuments in Oakwoods are illustrated in the International Edition.]